

REMARKS

The examiner has raised the following issues:

1. **Rejection based on 35 U.S.C. §102(b)
as anticipated by, Martin (U.S. Patent No. 4,749,215)**

The examiner has rejected claims 1, 3, 4, 17, 20, 21, 25, 26, and 58 as being anticipated by Martin (U.S. Patent 4,749,215). The rejection of claim 1 has been rendered moot by its cancellation. With respect to the remaining claims as amended herein, the applicant respectfully disagrees.

The cited reference does not teach every aspect of the invention, as set forth in the amended claims as presently presented, either explicitly or impliedly. Importantly, a claim is anticipated only if each and every element as set forth in the claim is found, either expressly or inherently described, in a single prior art reference. *Verdegall Bros. v. Union Oil Co. of California*, 814 F.2d 628, 631, 2 USPQ2d 1051, 1053 (Fed. Cir. 1987). Also, see MPEP § 2131.

Claim 7 has been rewritten in independent form, incorporating the language of previously pending claim 1. Now, the amended claims 3, 4/3, 17, 20, 21, 25, 26/25, and 58 depend from claim 7 which has been re-written in the independent form which was indicated by the examiner to place the claims in condition for allowance. The limitations included in the amended claims clearly distinguish these claims from the cited reference. Accordingly, rejection based on 35 U.S.C. Section 102 is not proper, and thus it is respectfully requested that this basis of rejection be withdrawn with respect to claims 3, 4, 17 and 20, 21, 25, 26 and 58, as presently presented.

Further, it must be noted that the Martin references only teaches a split case expansion coupling of carbon steel (see col. 1, lines 30-40) and does not anticipate the materials of construction as set forth in claims 20 or 21.

2. Rejection based on 35 USC § 103(a)
as obvious over Martin (U.S. Patent No. 4,749,215)
In view of Marzolf, Sr. (U.S. Patent No. 2,911,239)

The examiner has rejected claims 2, 5, 18-19, and 22-24 as being obvious over Martin (U.S. Patent No. 4,749,215) in view of Marzolf, Sr. (U.S. Patent No. 2,911,239).

It must first be noted that these claims now depend from independent claim 7, which provides a gasket seat comprising "a recess in said interior wall of said first and of said second ring portions." As noted above, nothing in Martin teaches or suggests a structure in which a gasket seat comprises a recess in an interior wall of a first and second ring portion. Marzolf also fails to teach or suggest such a structure.

As the cited references do not teach or suggest the claimed details individually, much less in combination, it is believed that the rejected claims 2, 5, 18, 19, and 22-24, as amended, are not made obvious by the cited references.

To establish prima facie obviousness of a claimed invention, all the claim limitations must be taught or suggested by the prior art. However, with respect to claims 2, 5, 18-19, and 22-24 as currently presented, based on their parent claim 7, the prior art combination suggested by the examiner as a basis for the rejection does not result in teaching the claimed invention. All of the words in a claim must be considered in judging the patentability of that claim against the prior art. The teaching or suggestion to make the claimed combination must be found in the prior art. Neither Martin nor Marzolf teach or suggest or suggest the invention as now claimed. Since the prior art references do not teach or suggest all of the claim limitations, as now presented, it is respectfully submitted that a prima facie case of obviousness has not been made out by the examiner. Consequently, it is respectfully requested that this basis of rejection be withdrawn.

3. **Rejection based on 35 USC § 103(a)**
as obvious over Martin (U.S. Patent No. 4,749,215)

The examiner has also rejected claim 6 as being obvious over Martin (U.S. Patent No. 4,749,215).

Amended claim 6/3/7 now depends from parent claim 7. Claim 7, in its current form, has previously been indicated as allowable by the examiner. Consequently, it is respectfully requested that this basis of rejection be withdrawn.

4. **Rejection based on 35 USC § 103(a)**
as obvious over Martin (U.S. Patent No. 4,749,215)

The examiner has also rejected claims 59-61 as being obvious over Martin (U.S. Patent No. 4,749,215).

Amended claims 59-61 depend from (a) amended claim 7 and (b) claims 31 and 49, all of which were previously indicated to be allowable. Consequently, it is respectfully requested that this basis of rejection be withdrawn.

5. **Allowable Subject Matter**

Claims 31-57 as originally presented stand allowed. Further, the examiner indicated that claims 7-16 and 27-30 would be allowable if re-written in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Consequently, claims 7, 13, 14, 27, and 29 have been re-written in independent form. Amended claims 8-12, 15-16, 38, and 30 now ultimately depend from amended parent claims 7, 13, 14, or 27. Accordingly, it is believed that amended claims 7-16, and 27-30 are in condition for allowance.

6. Drawings

Formal Drawings are in preparation and will be submitted under separate cover when completed.

7. New Claims 63-65

New independent claim 63 requires arcuately extending ears that are configured for close fitting mating engagement when the split ring portions are in a closed position and at least one gasket seat in said inner wall of said first and said second ring portions. This feature clearly distinguishes new claim 63 from the prior art of record.

Claims 64 and 65 each depends from independent claim 63, and thus are also patentable.

SUMMARY

This amendment is in response to the Examiner's Office Action mailed April 25, 2005. It is respectfully submitted that in view of the arguments made above, and amendments made herein, the applicant's invention as now claimed is neither anticipated nor made obvious by the prior art of record. Therefore, reconsideration and withdrawal of all objections based on 35 U.S.C. §102(b) and §103(a) are respectfully requested.

For the reasons discussed in detail above, it is believed that this application is now limited to claims which are clearly patentable over references of record.

In the event any further issues remain after consideration of this response, the undersigned would welcome a phone call or e-mail in an attempt to resolve outstanding matters and bring the case into condition for allowance.

Done at Kent, County of King, State of Washington, on the 25th day of July, 2005.

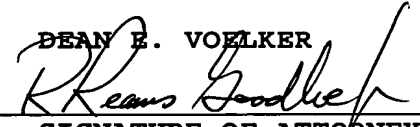
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